CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

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EDITED BY

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Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—JUDE.

ESSAY ON THE PROSPECTS OF IMMORTALITY.

No. IV.

ALL things which relate to the future destination of mankind, present themselves to the minds of all serious persons, with a degree of interest, solemnity, and importance, which can belong to no other subject.

The ever moving wheels of time are rolling us all onward to that bourne whence no traveller returns! We are all hastening to try the realities of an untried state. Of this we are conscious. But what this state may be, who can tell? None but the eternal Mind, can illumine our understandings, on a subject of such magnitude as the present. None but God can tell us whether there be a state of conscious existence for man after death, and whether this state be happy or miserable. This information He has given by numerous revelations, and we, as wise men, ought to attend to it, and to regulate our conduct accordingly.

Many men however are very unwise! With the light of divine revelation in their hands, and the momentous concerns of eternity in prospect, we see thousands floating heedlessly down the current of time as if there were no world but this in which we live;—no being who has a right to demand their obedience! We see myriads of noisy mortals who are capable of rational exercises, breathing out their ephemeral existence to as little purpose, as if they

were only made to flutter through life with the most fickle of the insect tribe, and then like other insects, to drop into inconsciousness.

Now if the original, physical and mental organization of man, be such as we have represented it to be, why are these things thus? Why such moral turpitude, such degradation, such giddiness and levity every where abounding? The answer is easy. *"We are fearfully and wonderfully made!"* The original organization of the body, and mind of man, rendered him susceptible of unlimited improvement, but at the same time from the necessity of things, this susceptibility involved a liability to degradations as much below brutality, as it afforded facilities for an ascent, step by step up the ladder of moral improvement, to all the illustrious grandeur of the heavenly principalities.

Brutes in consequence of the very limited extent of their mental powers, are neither capable of great mental elevation nor degradation; and as it is supposed that they are altogether destitute of moral powers, they are likewise from necessity incapable of moral improvement, and of moral degradation.

Not so with man! His mental and moral powers under proper circumstances render him capable of rising above all that is mortal by their cultivation, and of debasing himself below all that is brutal by their abuse. Hence we see men, in every age and nation, some of whom are perpetually increasing in useful knowledge, and making rapid advances in morality, and religion, while others by debauchery, idleness, and intemperance, render themselves the disgrace of human nature.

When therefore, we speak of the original dignity of man, we only mean his original fitness for high mental and moral attainments, by a correct exercise of his powers. We are of the opinion however at the same time, that man, may, by the abuse of his powers, lose this fitness; and in consequence, become "like a natural brute beast made to be taken and destroyed, and utterly perish in his own corruption."

In our estimation, a man of sterling integrity, good understanding, cultivated mind, and generous heart, whose

hope is full of immortality, and who pants daily for that wisdom and honor which comes from God only, is an object so grand, so noble, so interesting, and of such inestimable value in the conception of all the heavenly powers, as to be the delight of God and of angels: while on the other hand, the degraded wretch who only takes pleasure in iniquity, and tramples under his feet the privileges which the Almighty has bestowed upon him, will after searing his conscience, hardening his heart, and resisting the manifestations of the Divine Spirit, during the day or season appointed for salvation, "drown himself in destruction and perdition." Of such men Jesus will be ashamed in the presence of God and his holy angels!

We consequently can neither promise these men future immortality, nor future happiness. We are bound to deal plainly with them, and to tell them in the language of inspiration, that "those who seek for glory, honor, immortality," shall have eternal life. But to those who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man who doeth evil; upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile."

In the moral, as well as in the natural world, constant exertion, and unceasing perseverance are necessary, in order to the attainment of pre-eminence. The indolent religionist, as well as the sluggish farmer, shall starve in harvest and have nothing. God has called us by his gospel to glory and virtue; he has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness;" all the day long has he invited us to his banqueting house, to participate his bounties, in a feast which he has made for "all people;" from generation to generation has he caused his truth to shine upon us with the enrapturing splendor of multiplied manifestations, and invitations, and is still willing to admit rebellious man to the enjoyment of his favor; and after all these things — these wonders of love and of mercy, is it possible that any can be so ungrateful as to impeach the benevolent Creator, for not bestowing salvation on that part of the human race who do not desire it? As well might the mischievous idler, who has spent the spring, and summer in indolence,

complain in autumn, because God has not caused his fields to produce without cultivation!

This view of the subject cannot be dispensed with, without imminent danger, for it is the nature of man not to expend labor on those things which he can obtain without it. He does not sink a well, if he happen to live near a perennial spring, nor does he labor under a vertical sun, if he have a competency without it! This is a known principle of human nature, and the danger of teaching, that immortality and future happiness will be bestowed on all mankind indiscriminately, is hence obvious.

The Apostles, and Jesus Christ, presented immortality and eternal life to their pupils, as objects after which men ought to seek, and for which they should labor. "*To them who seek for glory, honor, immortality; eternal life.*" This was the soul enlivening promise which constrained the primitive Christians to "follow diligently after every good word and work." Immortality was placed before them as the glorious object after which they were commanded to run, and "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life" was that, for which they were taught to labor. In this labor of love, they might gain an unfading crown by industry, or lose their own souls, and fall short of every animating prospect, by negligence.

At present therefore, we will only farther observe, that we should be sorry to cause the intervention of even a transient cloud between any holy man or woman on earth, and those joys which await the righteous in the peaceful mansions of their Divine Father. We cannot however cry peace, peace, where there is no peace. We can willingly do nothing which would tend to make men more indolent in matters of religion than they are at present. In a word, we desire to do every thing, which the scriptures recommend, as means of stirring up the minds of saints and sinners to zeal in good works. Immortality is indeed lovely, and happy is the man who upon scriptural principles walks in the light of its manifestations. But if it were a thousand times more lovely, and more desirable than it is, this would no more justify us in promising its glories to the vicious lounger, than the beauty of the sun,

and the benefits derivable from his genial rays, would justify us in preaching perpetual sunshine. The language of every heart with respect to the hope of immortality, ought to be, such as is expressed in the following lines:

On flowery beds of indolence,
Shall I to glory rise,
While others toil'd in penitence,
And fought to win the prize?
No—I will gird my armor on,
My breastplate, helmet, shield,
And with the spirit's two edg'd sword,
Prepare to take the field.—[EDITOR.

QUERY ANSWERED.

It is said, that Jesus when he was on earth, commanded his disciples "to love their enemies, to bless those who cursed them, and to pray for those who despitefully used them, and persecuted them," and that if any man should "smite them on one cheek they should turn to him the other also." Now Sir, I ask you, whether these commands are not in opposition to the reason and fitness of things, and consequently, impracticable and absurd?

Answer. That the above commands are but little regarded at present, and that many who wear the name of Christians, have exhibited some ingenuity in endeavoring to fritter them away, is what I readily grant; but that obedience to these commands, is either impracticable or absurd, cannot be granted, without an obvious departure from the genius of the whole christian religion. The partial and carnal policy of this world, it must be admitted, stands and has ever stood opposed to the wisdom of Heaven; and this is the cause of the superabundance of wickedness which has existed in the world, and in the church, from the beginning to the present moment. Indulgent Heaven has been pleased to send an ambassador of peace to our

quarrelsome world, with a message of "peace, and good will towards all men," but temporizing politicians, and aspiring priests, have mutilated, carnalized, and secularized the contents of his message, so that it is made to mean something, any thing, every thing, and nothing, according to the whim of every expositor, and thus many of the precious doctrines of the New Testament have like a nose of wax been made to point in any direction, calculated for the time being to subserve the ostensible interests of the popular party.

Nothing perhaps has more liberally contributed to the corruption of christianity, than the very frequent and convenient practice of spiritualizing such passages as the above; for by this means, a licence might be, and has been obtained, for the practice of all manner of iniquity. But these corruptions ought now to be numbered with the "fooleries of by gone years," and the "law and the testimony" ought to be the authoritative standard of every man who makes the smallest pretensions to christianity.

We know that men in all past ages, in so far as they have acted independently of Divine Revelation, have been dictated by the principles of worldly wisdom. But what we ask, has been the consequence of their having thus acted? One consequence among many others, is, that this world has been a slaughter house for human beings, from time immemorial. Suppose now, that instead of being directed by their own wisdom, or rather their own foolishness, men would have consented to the precepts of our Saviour and have regulated their conduct accord ngly, what would have been the consequence? Ah! we should have had a Heaven on earth! But as things have been, rivers of blood, bitter lamentations, scalding tears, expiring groans, and cruel butchery, have disgraced humanity from the murder of Abel, to the present time.

I know of no people who have better exemplified the practical utility of the benevolent precepts of Jesus Christ, than have the people called Friends, or Quakers. The illustrious Penn, in the establishment of a colony in Pennsylvania, among the ferocious aborigines of that country, has left a practical commentary on the words of

our Saviour, which deserves to be read by all men of every age and nation, as a living memento, of the wisdom of Jesus, and the folly of those, who oppose his teaching, or mutilate his precepts. Ninety years did these defenceless *children of peace*, subsist in uninterrupted quietude, surrounded by hordes of painted warriors, while the women and children of the *warlike inhabitants* of other settlements, fell victims to the bloody tomahawk and scalping knife, of ruthless barbarians. And it is said, that the conciliating policy of Penn, has so impressed even the Indians with a veneration for the Quakers, that they will not, even at this time, molest a Friend, if they know him to be of that order.

Of all weapons ever used in either offensive or defensive war, love is the most puissant. Just "as a soft answer turns away wrath," love, and those benevolent actions, which are its legitimate effects, conquer enmity.

So artists, on the sullen ore of lead,
Heap coals of fire upon its head;
With genial heat, the metal learns to glow,
And pure from dross the silver runs below.

We say therefore, that the wisdom of man, in so far as it ever has been exhibited in acts of revenge, "is foolishness with God;" and that there is no more true wisdom, in any, or all such actions, than there would be in throwing fire brands on a burning house, in order to extinguish the flames.

Men have practised revenge, and retaliation, and have quarrelled with the precepts of our Saviour, and with one-another ever since the Christian era: But has the world ever received any benefit in this way? The answer might be given on pages of blood, and in letters of fire. Why then will they not learn by experience, and avoid those evils which are the unavoidable consequence of counteracting the letter and spirit of the above precepts?

The good man, is too wise "to do evil that good may come;" he has too much confidence in the promises of the Saviour, to believe, that the war, instead of the peacemaker, will receive a blessing. He exultingly says to him-

self, under all circumstances, "who will harm me, if I be a follower of that which is good:" and therefore he avenges not himself, but rather gives place to wrath. If his enemy is hungry, he feeds him; if thirsty, he gives him drink. He suffers not himself to be overcome with evil, but overcomes evil with good. When he is reviled he reviles not again; when he is persecuted he threatens not, but commits himself to Him who judges righteously." In a word, he is so harmless, benevolent, and affectionate, that none but monsters, would seek to do him harm.

But you say you cannot love your enemies. This is possible; but what does it prove? It proves the transcendant excellency of the Christian religion. We know, that neither Deists, nor Atheists, nor Pagans, nor Mahomedans, nor anti-Christians, can love their enemies. And the reason why they cannot is obvious. They are not in possession, of the love inspiring word of truth. "The gospel of the grace of God," dwells not in their hearts. They are destitute of "the spirit of Christ." "No man overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Go then, and *learn of Jesus*," who loved his enemies with such an unabating ardor of affection, that he died for them, and prayed for their forgiveness, and he will teach, and enable you, to love yours, and to become wise unto salvation.

I will now conclude my answer to the above query, by presenting the reader, with one of the parables of Dr. Franklin, which however I am sorry to say, I must write from memory, as I have no copy at hand. A couple of angels, the one an old, and the other a young one, on an excursion from the heavens to the earth for the purpose of making discoveries, arrived in that part of the atmosphere which is directly over the Mediterranean, just as two gallant fleets had engaged in deadly combat. Consternation immediately seized the youthful angel, when he beheld the dreadful scene! and he exclaimed, whither have you conducted me? you said you would conduct me to the

earth, but lo! you have brought me to hell! No, no, said the old angel, this is indeed the earth! and these are men!! Devils do not kill each other, as these men do!!!

THE ADMISSION OF ANOTHER TOPIC.

At the commencement of this work, it was my intention to have devoted the whole of the present volume, to a confutation of Deism and Atheism, but the recent occurrence of events which I could not then foresee, renders it necessary that in addition to those topics, another should at this time be introduced for investigation.

It will be remembered that I was once a Universalist preacher, and that during the Spring of One thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight, I publicly withdrew from that connexion, and was by the authority of Jesus Christ, baptised for the remission of my sins, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by which I became a member of the Church of Christ, and received a constitutional right to all the privileges and immunities of the house of God.

This being the case, I considered myself bound by the law of my Divine Master, to walk in obedience to the ordinances of his house; and this I have endeavored to do from that time to the present. This course, however, has it seems, been very offensive to many of my former associates, and has rendered them importunate to become acquainted with my reasons for having withdrawn from them. They have demanded, from time to time, my objections to Universalism, and to Universalists, and have frequently requested a presentation of these objections to the public, in a tangible form, so that there might be no mistakes, either with themselves, or with others, in relation to the present condition of my mind.

Believing this demand to be reasonable, it becomes my indispensable duty to submit to its requisitions; and this I should have done much sooner, had it not been that a difficulty existed in my mind with respect to the propriety of introducing such a topic under the title "*Christian Evi-*

dences." After mature deliberation, however, I have concluded that there can be no impropriety, in fully developing under the title of this work, the principles upon which I have acted. The process through which my mind has passed, was an evidential process, and how much soever it may have been metamorphosed, in its aspirations after those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which dwell in Christ, the evidences of the Christian religion, were the Divine instruments by which all its changes were wrought, and must now be the instruments by which my present views of things, shall be vindicated.

But this is not all. Those who suppose that infidelity wages war only in the open fields, and in clear day-light, are much mistaken. It has a thousand lurking holes! It often transforms itself into an angel of light; and not unfrequently obtains a quiet resting place in the bosoms of such as are clothed with the sanctities of Christianity! Infidelity in the Church, has from time immemorial, gnawed with all its unceasing rapacity upon the vitals of religion, and has been the cause of evils nameless and innumerable, which disgrace the religion of Christ, and make it the object of daily suspicion. It is in the Church that infidelity becomes doubly dangerous. Could it be kept at a distance among the professedly unregenerate, the vigorous exercises of a perfect faith in the minds of those who profess religion, would purify their souls from every pollution, and the consequence would be, that a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, would be exhibited to the world as a specimen of what the Gospel of the grace of God can do in the redemption of sinners, in the place of a plurality of wrangling sects, who by their anti-scriptural dogmas, and contentious spirits, are disgracing religion, and doing infinite injury to mankind.

I have no doubt but that there is too much of the spirit of infidelity in all of us! In fact many religious persons seem to make scepticism meritorious; or at least appear to enjoy a species of gloomy consolation in conversing concerning their many doubts! With some men we should with difficulty pass for Christians, were we not to express some fashionable dubiety with respect to our calling.

Now this doubting, and halting, which has become so conspicuous among many who profess religion, is a proof against which there is no rising up, that scepticism predominates alarmingly in the Church; and if so, it follows, that every philanthropist ought to wage a war of extermination against the monster, and that every individual in whose breast this demon has taken refuge, ought to submit with all diligence to such an operation, as would be likely to dislodge so unfriendly an inhabitant.

Be it known therefore, to all men whom it may concern, that agreeably to the motto of this work, I shall continue to "*contend earnestly for the faith*," and the whole *faith* which was "*once delivered to the Saints;*" and be it known to the Universalists in particular, that I shall also proceed, in each subsequent number of this work, to exhibit the errors of * Universalism. And this I shall endeavor to do, under the influence of a spirit of meekness and charity, which will show, that I have not been altogether divested of Christian love, by what has ignorantly been denominated my apostacy.

If in the investigation of this subject it shall be ascertained that Infidelity is one indispensable constituent of Universalism, as it is now taught, I cannot forbear indulging the hope that all good Universalists, (and I do think there are some good ones,) will aid me in destroying, and bringing to a perpetual end, such a delusive, and ruinous amalgamation, and in teaching my old friends a pure speech, such as will make us all happy, and restore us to the enjoyment of fellowship, and brotherly love.

And now brethren I conjure you not to permit your pride, or your prepossessions to stimulate you to a resistance of the truth. Do not fear the popular cry of *turn coat!* Remember that none but dunces and simpletons will ever have the superlative honor of never changing their opinions! The wise man changes every day, but the fool never changes!—EDITOR.

* There is a difference betwixt Universalism and the doctrine of the Restorationists. The Universalists deny the doctrine of future punishment, but the Restorationists acknowledge it. This is the difference. I therefore wish that it should be distinctly understood, that I propose exhibiting the errors of Universalism.—EDITOR.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A UNIVERSALIST AND AN ATHEIST.

Atheist. Good morning friend Universalist. I have been informed that you have become *mighty* religious of late, and I have called in order to ascertain what are your views concerning religious matters. There are so many sects at present, all professing to be led by the spirit of God, and who are nevertheless led in such opposite directions, that the world is full of uproar and confusion; and as to my own part I believe in none of them. But an Atheist, an acquaintance of mine, informed me the other day, that he was mightily pleased with the Universalists. He says he considers them as pioneers, for the army of Deists, and Atheists, which are now marching with slow, but sure pace, to universal empire; and that he has been a close observer of these things for many years, and does know, that when a man becomes a Universalist, of what he calls the *Ballou school*, the transition, thence to Deism, is very small, and that as no man, can, with any consistency rest long in Deism, Atheism, is the next and last abiding place. As a proof of this opinion, my friend mentioned a Universalist preacher, who has withdrawn from the Universalist connexion, and is now editing a paper in the city of New York, entitled the *Free Enquirer*, an atheistical work, and another preacher who withdrew from them, and is now preaching the *ancient gospel*, as he calls it. The last mentioned preacher shared bountifully of the displeasure of the Universalists, so that they handled him very roughly in several of their periodicals, and made him the subject of much of their neighborhood censure, while the Atheist was permitted to pass with impunity. This said my friend augurs well: and is more convincing than a thousand arguments, that the Universalists are in their hearts more friendly to Deism and Atheism, than to Christianity, as it is preached by the sects.

Universalist. I am happy to see you, and feel disposed to give you any satisfaction, which you can reasonably ask of me. It is true that the world is at present in an uproar, by the contradictory and unscriptural doctrines of the sects;

and this is very discouraging to many tender minds. But such is the march of mind at present, that the superstition of the ages of ignorance will soon give place to the religion of reason, and we will all become rational and liberal Christians. As to what you say about the tendency of Universalism, you must excuse me if I deny it. For so far is Universalism from leading to infidelity, that it has to my certain knowledge, an opposite tendency. Many infidels have within a few years joined our societies, and are now the ornaments of that religion, which they once blasphemed. The contradictory, and anti-scriptural dogmas of the sects, are much better calculated to make infidels, than is the rational, consistent, scriptural, charitable doctrine of Universalism. We however think that both Deism and Atheism, are more consistent, than are many doctrines now popular in the world; and we would much rather be a Deist, than a Trinitarian; and an Atheist, than an advocate for endless punishment. We would not however willingly be pioneers for either of them, or indeed for any sect under heaven. We believe that the progress of Universalism will be commensurate with the increase of light, and that Deism, and Atheism, and every work of darkness will fall before it, until it will fill the whole earth. We considered the apostacy of the editor of the Free Enquirer a very unfortunate circumstance, but as he continued to be an opposer of orthodoxy, we felt no inclination to molest him. The case however being different with the other preacher to whom you alluded, we were afraid he might give the daughters of the Philistines cause to triumph, and we therefore attacked him lance in hand, as a dangerous enemy to our cause.

Atheist. This was as it should have been, and our party was mightily pleased with the course which you pursued with respect to those men. We have heard that you, in your periodicals, *drub* with a *heavy hand* every sect except your own, while you preserve the most friendly silence with respect to Deism and Atheism. This is so agreeable to our minds, that we never fail to show our good will to you, by liberal contributions, whenever a subscription is handed around for the settlement of one of your ministers, or for the building of a meeting house.

Universalist. We know that you have been very liberal to us, and this has caused us to contract a friendship for you, which we feel toward no other sect. Indeed, I know not what we should have done in many places, had it not been for your assistance. The orthodox are so much bigotted, that it is very often difficult for our preachers to get a place for preaching and lodging among them. In such cases therefore, your friends have often been of much benefit to us. Not long since, for instance, one of our preachers visited a certain city on the Ohio river, and the infidels gave him such a cordial reception, that he returned pleased half out of his wits. They, with others, offered to build him a meeting house if he would remain with them, and in addition to these marks of liberality, they told him that they did'nt care a d——n, what he preached, provided he would so preach, as to pull orthodoxy down.

Atheist. These comfortable tidings delight my very soul. Let the Universalists go on conquering and to conquer, and by the *stomach* of Epicurus, and the *anti-matrimonial act* of Robert Owen, we shall gain the victory at no very distant period. But just at this moment I recollect the lamentations of a certain Deist of my acquaintance. "I," said he, "have contributed very liberally to the Universalists, not that I care for their religion, but because I desire to see orthodoxy whipped out of the country. But there is so little energy among them, that I fear they will never succeed agreeably with their anticipations. If they would continue the contest with the orthodox," said he, "until they overthrow them, and then die themselves, it would be just to my mind. But they always die, in every place in this country, in a few years, and the orthodox drive them from the ground which they had in the first instance taken from them.

Universalist. There have always been men, of gloomy minds in every community, disposed to prognosticate evil things. I am sure that our cause has stood the fiery darts of orthodoxy in the Eastern states, for more than fifty years, and that it is still becoming more popular. I know however, that some of our enemies say that we have no religion, and that contention is the element in which we live, and move, and have our being; and that we can live

no longer, than we are warmed, by its fiery action upon our souls. But even if I should admit that this is in some measure true of some of us, yet I contend, that we are no more faulty in this respect, than are the members of other religious bodies.

Atheist. With what you now say I heartily concur. Let me next know your opinions on some important points of doctrine. You believe, I suppose, in a future state as it is called? What do you think concerning the doctrine of a judgment, and a limited punishment after death?

Universalist. What do I think! Why I think that if there be any punishment after death, it will be endless. We believe that all mankind will be saved in the resurrection, and that in the future world, there will be no moral discriminations, but the whole race of Adam will be equal to the angels of God, and will be the children of God, being children of the resurrection.

Atheist. What is your opinion with regard to the evils, physical and moral of the present state? If there be a God, and this God be intelligent, wise, benevolent, and almighty, would he not have prevented the introduction of evil into this world? Why does he permit one thing to live by the destruction of another? Can he not prevent the shedding of blood among the bestial tribes, and make some other provision for their sustenance? Why does he suffer some of the human species to be born blind, deaf, in a state of idiocy, bodily deformity, and others in a state of hereditary disease? Why are there storms, volcanoes, famines, pestilences, and a long list of painful and destructive epidemics to war against man and beast, and to abridge many of their comforts? Why do moral evils of almost every kind prevail wherever human society exists? If God be possessed of the perfections which Christians, and even Deists attribute to him, would he not have been good, and powerful enough to have prevented all these evils, and to have placed every living thing in a state of happiness, in the beginning of its existence, and to have secured to it, happiness, throughout the whole of its life?

Universalist. The way in which we obviate all such difficulties, is this. We say that with God there is no such thing as evil. That is, God does not consider those

things to be evils, which appear to be so to us. We say with Pope, that,

> "Spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right."

We believe, that all the evils of the present state, moral as well as physical, are absolutely necessary, and will eventuate in the highest good, of all mankind. God is infinite;—man is finite, and consequently can do nothing to oppose the divine will. The will of God is infinite,—the will of man is finite, and therefore the will of man must in all things, and at all times, be controlled by the all-controlling will of the Almighty; so that no man, ever did, or ever can act counter to the divine will. That filthy drunkard, who like the sow, wallows in the mire, and who spends his life in profanity, obscenity and debauchery, in all his actions does the will of God, as well, as the highest seraph that adores and burns; and will reach heaven as certainly, and as soon, as the best Christian, or the strictest moralist in the world. All the crimes committed by men, are just as necessary to the best good of the whole moral system, as the giving of alms, or the entertaining of strangers.

Atheist. This is strong meat, and although I am an Atheist, I must acknowledge it is too strong for me. I fear my dear sir, that your doctrine will tend to increase the evils of our state, rather than to diminish them. If I understand you, no man can do any thing which will not in some way, be productive of good, and consequently when any man shall be furnished with the wisdom of the Universalian school, he need not be very scrupulous in his system of morals, as he will have the assurance of doing good, even when he is committing what the common sense of mankind has led them to denominate evil. Now, according to my system of ethics, Atheists must forever possess stronger motives for the observance of what men call good morals, than you can ever have. We do not believe in the existence of a God, and we believe consequently that all the evils of the present order of things, took their rise, partly from the unavoidable imperfections of this state, and partly from the ignorance of manki nd,

We also utterly deny your doctrine of a future state, and the universal salvation of mankind by a resurrection from the dead. This life is consequently our all. We expect no other. We have our portion in this life. Now we have learned by experience, that in order that we should enjoy the most of this life, we must avoid all those excesses which are productive of physical evils, because all physical evils have a tendency to shorten life, and consequently our motive to temperance, must be just as strong, as is our love of life, and dread of death. But these are motives with which Universalism can never inspire a man. You teach that all evil will eventuate in good. We believe, that evil, is only evil, and that continually. You believe that if a man by intemperance, or by any other means, deprives himself of his present life, there is another, and a better life in reversion for him. We believe that he can never enjoy any but the present life, and that he should for this reason be as careful of it as possible. You believe, that when the drunkard by intemperance, or the murderer by the gallows, loses his present life, he gains heaven in the resurrection. We believe that these characters lose every thing by death, and gain nothing. Now, sir, judge which system, Universalism or Atheism, is calculated to inspire us with the strongest motives for practising what men call virtue.

Universalist. I have never before thought of these things. I have however, one advantage over you. I can enjoy the hope of immortality, and live rich in anticipation, while I do live, and this is what no Atheist can do. I would not lose the hope of immortality for all this world. It would fill my mind with horror to contemplate the shortness, and uncertainty of life, the certainty of death, and the eternal loss of conscious existence. I cannot bear to think of such things.

Atheist. All that is very possible. I was not however talking about what you would like, or what you would dislike. I was showing you the inevitable moral effects of Universalism. That very immortality in which you so much delight, is, in the way in which you hold it, the root of many evils. I do not believe in any thing of the kind, but if I did, I should be always cautious not to speak of

it, as a life to be bestowed on the wicked, as well as the righteous, because if any wicked man could, or would act agreeably with such a doctrine, he would hasten his mortal life to an end as soon as possible, in order that he might the sooner possess a better one: and if he should have any scruples of conscience while closing his mortal career, he might very soon quell them, by saying with you—

"In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right."

Universalist. Our enemies have frequently said, that if they believed as we do, they would kill themselves, in order that they might get to heaven the sooner. But it is evident they do not know what they would do. One thing is certain, and that is, that there are not more instances of suicide amongst us, than there are amongst others. We consider suicide as being contrary to the law of God, and hence we, as good Universalists, cannot commit it.

Atheist. Is God's law contrary to his own will?

Universalist. No.

Atheist. Then if suicide be contrary to the law of God, it must also be contrary to his will; and if contrary to his will, the will of God can be opposed; and if the will of God be opposed in one violation of the law, it is opposed in every violation; and if it be opposed in every, or in any violation of the law, your whole theory concerning the origin of evil falls to the ground, and the questions which I asked concerning the evils of this state, remain unanswered.—EDITOR.

In justice to the Universalists, I must say, that they do not all hold the doctrine mentioned above. Against those however who do, the objections of our Atheist will stand in full force. And I hereby challenge all the Universalists from Missouri to Maine, to prove, by any logical process, that the doctrine which teaches, that there is no punishment after death, and that God is the author of all the evils of this state, or that in reality, there is no such thing as evil in the universe, is as favorable to morality, as Atheism. I mention this fact, for the benefit of the Universalists, with the hope, that they will at least make some improvement in their creed.

The objections presented against Universalism in the preceding dialogue, were once presented to me by an Atheist immediately after I had delivered a discourse, in vindication of Universalism.—EDITOR.

ON INTELLECTUAL AND ANIMAL CONCLUSIONS.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. EVANGELIST.

SHOULD some individual undertake to give to the people of our earth, a treatise on the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the moon, they would laugh at such an attempt to impose on their credulity. "The man," they would say, "is as ignorant of the moon as we are," and hence his production would become the subject of ridicule. But at the same time, these very people, are guilty of speculations equally extravagant, in relation to subjects concerning which they know as little, as about the inhabitants of the lunar orb. Reason would dictate, that we should be silent with respect to those properties of the moon and its inhabitants, about which we know nothing, and concerning which, we have not the means of acquiring information, and it does the same, with respect to God, religion, and every thing else.

But should a friendly visitant descend to our earth from the moon, and bring us information concerning the manners and customs of the inhabitants of that orb, reason would dictate, that we should in the first place, examine his credentials; and that if we should find them to be good, we should in the next place, receive without contradiction or evasion, all the information which he might choose to communicate with respect to the place of his nativity: for if upon examination, we should find him in possession of such credentials as would infallibly prove him to be acting under a commission from the supreme powers of lunar government, the conclusion of reason would be, that he could communicate nothing but truth under such credentials, and that as the subject of his mission, is one, with respect to which we are totally ignorant, and but for

his mission, must have eternally remained so, we must necessarily submit to his teaching.

Now what we have supposed in relation to a mission from the moon, is substantially the fact, with respect to the mission of the son of God. Heaven is a place, about which, we, independently of revelation, know as little, as about the manners, customs, and politics of the lunar inhabitants. Without revelation, all the beauty, riches, and grandeur of that desirable country, must forever have been shrouded in impenetrable darkness, and even the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, would have been unknown! For whatever the advocates for natural religion may say to the contrary, it is a truth, and will remain a truth when the heavens and the earth pass away, "that no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal himself."

"God has at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken unto our fathers by the prophets," and "unto us by his Son." The Son of God, has likewise spoken to us through "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers," and he has in this way communicated a sufficiency of information, to "perfect the saints," in "every good word and work;" "to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified," so that it becomes the indispensable duty of every one to whom the gospel is announced, to attend to all the particulars of that information, which heaven's ambassador was, by the highest authority, commissioned to communicate to a perishing world. "This is my beloved Son," says the eternal Father, "in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."

Now, as many items of that system of theology which was taught by this Son of God, whom we are commanded to hear, relate to things, more remote and complicated, than are the affairs of the moon, or in fact, the most distant visible fixed star, it follows, that it would be as egregious folly in us, to dispute with the Apostle of the Father, about the reasonableness, or unreasonableness of the informarion which he brings us, as it would be in an ignorant, *well digger*, to contend with a visitant from the

moon, with respect to the chemistry of that orb. The well digger, by doing so, would expose his own ignorance and obstinacy; and the same may be said of every man, who does not submit unreservedly, to every particular contained in the message of the Son of God.

We do not wish to be misunderstood as speaking against the exercise of reason on matters of a religious nature. We only contend, that the highest reason would dictate unreserved submission to the teaching of Jesus, so that if any thing, or many things should be found in his message diametrically opposed to all our preconceived notions about things, it would in such case, and in all such cases, be wise in us, to conclude, that he has had better opportunities than we to obtain correct information concerning such facts. And we should therefore sit humbly at his feet, as pupils, respecting him as our all-wise, all-sufficient preceptor, "in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This, I say, we should all do, after having in the first place, with the utmost circumspection, examined his credentials; or in other words, the evidences of the christian religion, so as to be able upon intellectual, and logical principles, to believe him, to be "*a teacher sent from God.*"

The true dignity, and nobility of a man, requires that his conclusions should all be intellectual; and in order that they may be so, he must place his mind in a state of subordination to the laws of the science, the principles of which he investigates. If he would be a chemist, he must submit his speculations to the conclusions of chemical analysis. If he would be an anatomist, he must carefully examine all the complicated minutiæ of the human body. If he would be an astronomer, he must be governed by the rules and admeasurements of geometry. And if he would be a christian, he must take Christ at his word! For says Christ, "except a man be converted, and become as a little child," (that is, entirely docile and teachable,) "he shall in no wise, enter into the kingdom of heaven." And an apostle says, "if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world, is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

And again, "the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain;" from which we learn, that if any man be too wise, or too prudent in his own conceit, to take Jesus at his word, without wresting or wilfully perverting any of his sayings, he is too wise and prudent to be his disciple! He is, in short, a fool!

How far men, and men too professing christianity, may have departed from the above principles of the Divine government, is not for us to determine. One thing, however, is obvious, and that is, that there is a very general and lamentable departure from those principles. There are but few, who ever gave themselves the trouble to acquaint themselves with the evidences of the christian religion. They assent to the truth of christianity, as they would have assented to Mohamedanism, had they been educated in Turkey, and are believers in Christ, merely because *papa* and *mama*, and a long list of *ancestors* believed; while others, many of whom are beardless boys, who never read the bible through in their lives, and who are more ignorant of those evidences upon which the christian religion is founded, than is the ass of its master's crib, vociferate a thousand ignorant objections, against the bible and religion.

The fact is, that in the present degraded condition of the human family, men are more governed by animal impulse, than by the clear conclusions, of a rational, well instructed mind. Hence ask many of them whether they believe the Christian religion to be true? They will very readily answer you in the affirmative. But ask them, why they believe it to be true? and they are incapable of giving you a reason of their hope! They will perhaps give you an answer, but not such an answer, as we should call rational. One man, perhaps, would tell you a long dream, which alarmed him in the first instance, and caused him to seek religion. Another was in his father's barn, in the evening, and a certain ball of fire, with kind intent no doubt, came and struck his head, and illuminated the barn until midnight, and never departed until his soul was converted to God! Another was alarmed at the clapping of a preacher's hands, and submitted to sit a few times on the *anxious seat*, while the good minister, like a good Roman priest, stood between the liv-

ing God, and the dead soul of the mourning sinner: in these ways, and in a hundred such ways, have men been kept in ignorance, while the religion of Jesus was bleeding at every pore, and infidelity laughed with scorn at its imbecility. And to this source, may be traced national, district, and family religions. For though there be many men who have embraced religion from the influence of conclusions purely intellectual, still the religion of the majority is founded merely in the influence of relations of a fleshly nature, which would have made them worshippers of Jupiter, Osiris, Brama, or Juggernaut, had they lived under those circumstances which surround the worshippers of those idols.

There is too much manism, too much human invention, party pride, and self will in the religion of this generation. The precipitancy, and the impetuosity with which we too generally arrive at conclusions, together with that obstinacy, with which we too often defend those fantastic theories which by our own impetuosity we had framed, is as stubborn, and bitter enemy, to mental as well as religious improvement. If a man's heart has not been subdued by Jesus, it is hard indeed for him to depart from his old prejudices and errors, especially as he knows that the foolish world will have many hard things to say about him, should he change his opinions. Men are moreover liable to enthusiasm. Their minds become heated by party, or individual pride, ignorance of the truth, a desire to promote the cause which they have espoused, believing it to be the cause of God, &c. so that they seem incapable of reasoning, and to attempt to reason with them, is like "casting pearl before swine; they will trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." All such men, whether they profess the religion of Jesus Christ or not, may justly be called "*animal men.*" They are not his subjects;—they are rather rebels against the King in Zion: and hence he will say to all such, when Babylon shall be judged, "*depart, I never knew you.*"

God has sent Jesus into this world to be our king, our light and our life. The man who "crucifies the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" who acquaints himself, by studious deliberation, and application with the principles

of his government, and submits to all his institutions, obeys the Divine command, "Hear ye Him;" while he who through national, district, family, or individual motives, or through indolence, neglects the teaching, or any part of the teaching of Jesus Christ, is unworthy a place in his kingdom.

How many men are there who have so far rejected the use of intellect in religious matters, and have put themselves under the dominion of feeling to such an extent, as to conclude, that they cannot become Christians, until they have some strange and inexplicable impulses? Such men are not attending to Jesus. They are rather looking to themselves, and to one another, than to Jesus and his word. And we must not omit mentioning in this place, that these men, who thus begin their religious profession by *feeling*, are generally ever after, except they have candor enough to receive better information, the slaves of doubt and inconstancy. Ask one of them to sing, to pray, to exhort, and ten to one, if you do not hear him *drawl* out his objection; "*I don't feel like it!*" And thus you see they can do nothing without their agreeable impulses. Away with such notions! Christians are bound by the law of faith, to walk by faith, and not by feeling, and hence "there is now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." That is, who do, what the Spirit commands, whether the flesh be willing or not.

I must now conclude this article, by admonishing my readers to examine the credentials of Heaven's Ambassador, and not to rest satisfied, as too many are doing, with a blind assent to Christianity. First acquaint yourselves with the evidences upon which the religion of Jesus is predicated, and then you will be better prepared to submit to his authority. You will find that the Christian religion, is a religion of facts, and not of opinions, and speculations;—that the testimonies of the apostles, were founded on a few fundamental matters of fact,—that Christian faith rests on their testimony;—that our religion is built on faith, hope and love, and that if we walk by this rule, we shall make good our way to Heaven.—EDITOR.